

Kulshan Creek kids learn about eagles

by **LYNSI BURTON**
Staff Writer

MARBLEMOUNT — Every time the children from the Kulshan Creek youth program spotted a bald eagle through their binoculars at a Marblemount viewing site Saturday, they ran to tell a grown-up.

"I saw one a minute ago but I forgot where it is," 10-year-old Ardando Hernandez said.

"I saw one in the tall tree," said Nancy Andrade, 11.

About 36 children from the Kulshan Creek Neighborhood Kids Program went eagle-watching along the Skagit River for this month's field trip, with the help of the Mount Vernon Police Department, North Cascades Institute, National Park Service and U.S. Forest Service. The program hosts monthly field trips for children living in the low-income Kulshan Creek neighborhood of Mount Vernon, allowing them to learn about wildlife in hands-on settings.

First, the children gathered at the Mount Baker Ranger District in Sedro-Woolley, where they viewed a presentation about bald eagles and salmon. They also gathered around for an up-close look at a live bald eagle, 13-year-old Freedom from the Sarvey Wildlife Center in Arlington.

Jeff Guidry, Freedom's handler, taught the kids about eagles' diet, hunting habits and habitat.

"It was awesome," 11-year-old Isabel Cruz said. "I like its colors."

Several of the children said they've seen bald eagles before, whether on a previous eagle count-



Photos by **Lynsi Burton** / Skagit Valley Herald

Edwin Lopez-Ortiz, 5, takes his turn gazing at bald eagles through a telescope Saturday on the Skagit River in Marblemount. Edwin was part of a field trip with the Kulshan Creek Neighborhood Kids Program, which allows low-income children to enjoy Skagit wildlife.

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— **11-YEAR-OLD ISABEL CRUZ**

ing field trip or near their home or school.

After taking a school bus to milepost 100 in Marblemount, the children took turns viewing birds through a telescope and waved to the bird-watching rafters floating down the river.

Dan Cruz, 11, spent his time intently gazing at the river banks and treetops through his binoculars. After about 30 minutes of

searching for bald eagles, he reported spotting four.

Using his observational skills and what he learned about female eagles being larger than males, he said, "They're all the same, but I think there's only one male."

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Jeff Guidry of the Sarvey Wildlife Center shows off a 13-year-old female bald eagle named Freedom. Guidry taught Mount Vernon children about bald eagles at the Mount Baker Ranger District in Sedro-Woolley before the kids traveled to Marblemount to spot the birds in the wild.